Gainesville Six Will Face Disruption Charge

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP)— First it was the Chicago Seven. Then the Harrisburg Seven. Now it's the Gainesville Six.

Like their predecessors, the Gainesville Six, six members of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, are defendants in a Justice Department conspiracy case.

The government says they plotted to disrupt next week's Republican National Convention in Miami Beach. The veterans say the government is attempting to silence their protest and the case is based on testimony of a paid FBI informer who has a history of mental instability.

Leaders of the VVAW say the conspiracy indictments against the six are founded on a series of innocent acts which the government has deliberately strung together in a sequence designed to make them look like part of an overall plot.

The veterans indicted by a federal grand jury in Tallahassee, Fla., on July 13 are Scott Camil, 26, of Miami; Don Perdue, 23, of Hallandale, Fla.; Alton Foss, 25, of Miami; William Patterson, 24, of El Paso, Tex.; Peter Mahoney, 23, of New York City, and John W. Kniffin, 23, of Austin, Tex.

All are free on bond and their arraignments are scheduled for Aug. 24, the day after the GOP convention ends.

The case against the Gainesville Six is being presented by Guy Godwin, a Justice Department special investigator who also handled the Harrisburg case involving antiwar priest Philip Berrigan and other conspiracy cases for the government. In each case, the government failed to obtain convictions on the conspiracy charges.

In each of the preceding trials, defense attorneys claimed the government did not have enough evidence to move against the defendants and used the grand jury probes as "fishing expeditions" in hopes of dredging up something on which to base a case.

The grand jury investigation in Tallahassee is continuing, and VVAW leaders say the same "fishing expedition" techniques are being used.

The group got its name from Gainesville, Fla., site of the state VVAW headquarters and home of the University of Florida.

It was at Gainesville that Camil, leader of Florida's antiwar vets, met 24-year-old William Lemmer, a University of Arkansas student who was VVAW coordinator for Arkansas.

The VVAW now says Lemmer admitted to them that he was an informer paid by the FBI to infiltrate the group and act as an agent provacateur, urging them to use violence against the convention.

The VVAW also says two Dade County Public Safety officers who infiltrated the group were sent for the same purpose as Lemmer.

Camil says the government wanted the indictments to have an excuse to arrest the VVAW leaders and stop the veterans from protesting at the Democratic and Republican conventions.